

“BLOODLINE,” “PARTY LINE” AND “BOTTOM LINE”

Thoughts on the Role of Resistance Doctrine
Vis-à-vis the “Science of Resistance.”

BY JEFFREY HASLER

U.S. Army Special Operations Command *does not provide*, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School *does not assess, select, train, educate and write doctrine for*, and U.S. Army First Special Forces Command *does not command and train* Army Special Operations Forces “scientists.” These commands train highly capable elite Soldiers. Therefore, those who conceive, approve and support the pursuit of what is being touted as the “Science of Resistance” should carefully reflect on what such “science” promises; especially vis-à-vis the enduring and Army-prescribed role of extant ARSOF doctrine for resistance.

In 2017, *Small Wars Journal* article, “The Science of Resistance,” Paul Tompkins and Robert R. Leonhard state their purpose is “to elevate the study of resistance movements from a scholarly field of interest to a science.”⁰¹ Generally, there is nothing wrong with this proposal and resistance professionals should welcome contributions to understanding the phenomenon of resistance by academics and others. However, there is peril in superficially assuming a so-called “Science of Resistance” is somehow a cognitive panacea or a magic-bullet doctrine, training and education solution for ARSOF. Moreover, their assertion that doctrine is only interested in “resistance science... once a resistance movement takes up arms...” is a falsehood. Tompkins and Leonhard claim that a “science of resistance” would be a larger, more comprehensive context than doctrine does or could address, and therefore they imply that doctrine is subordinate to such “science.”

DEFINITION OF SCIENCE

- 1: the **state of knowing**: knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding
- 2 **a**: a department of **systematized knowledge as an object of study** //the science of theology
b: something (such as a sport or technique) that **may be studied or learned** like systematized knowledge //have it down to a science
- 3 **a**: knowledge or a system of knowledge covering **general truths or the operation of general laws** especially as obtained and tested through scientific method
b: such knowledge or such a system of knowledge concerned with the physical world and its phenomena: **natural science**
- 4: a **system or method reconciling practical ends with scientific laws** //cooking is both a science and an art

03DEC18 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/science>)

While a “Science of Resistance” has some promise and can be one contribution of many, it should not be conceived of, nor wielded as, a replacement for the doctrine, training and education that prepares ARSOF Soldiers to conduct resistance-focused missions such as unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense or counterinsurgency. Special operations benefit from and are informed by science, but such operations are inescapably practical undertakings that differ from “science” per se.

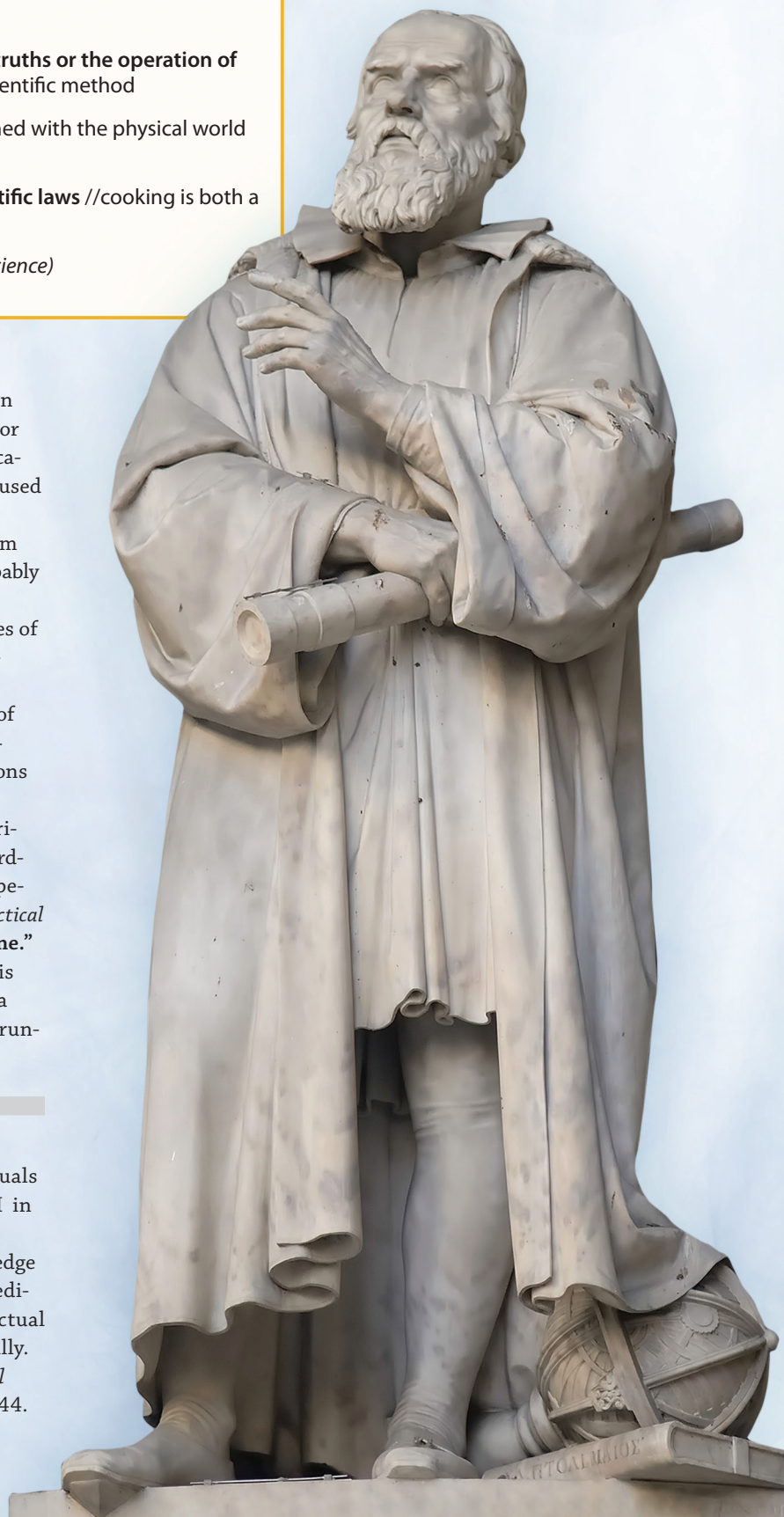
There is a need, therefore, to identify some of the virtues of Army resistance doctrine in contrast to a “Science of Resistance.” Doctrine and science are different things and have different virtues. This article outlines the enduring utility of Army doctrine for resistance and its proper relation to “science,” followed by some select cautions and recommendations for decision makers.

Army “resistance doctrine” is based on decades of experience and intellectual enterprise; it has a “**bloodline**.” Regardless of the interests of all other entities and actors, Army special operations writes resistance doctrine primarily for *practical* Army purposes; the Army and its doctrine have a “**party line**.” And although doctrine is routinely updated and revised, it is not temporally open-ended and endlessly speculative; it is a distillation of information in time, an official snapshot, a truncation, a “**bottom line**.”

BLOODLINE

Army doctrine for resistance stretches back to the manuals produced by the Office of Strategic Services in World War II in the early 1940s; it has a “bloodline.”

Thinking carefully and publishing systematized knowledge and general truths about “resistance” has a decades-long pedigree in international literature generally, and in the intellectual undertaking of Army Special Operations doctrine specifically. Resistance is discussed as early as the OSS FM No.4, *Special Operations Field Manual – Strategic Services*, 23 February 1944.



Post-war and post-OSS Army manuals continued these ideas in FM 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare*, 5 October 1951, which refers to “special forces operations” even before the unit was officially established in 1952. The discussion of why people resist and mention of “unconventional warfare” specifically appears as early as FM 31-21 *Guerrilla Warfare*, 23 March 1955. Unconventional Warfare, Special Forces Operations and related doctrine represent a continuous application of thinking about resistance shaped into practical products to train and educate Soldiers, and available to inform policy makers and partners on Army Special Operations capabilities.

The “science of resistance” is already implicit in the explicit characterization of resistance and how to support or oppose it in this doctrine as it has been for almost 80 years. Much of this historical continuity is carefully outlined in the new ATP 3-18.1, *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare*, March 2019. If a formalized “science of resistance” contributes to expanded knowledge of the phenomenon of resistance, that is welcome. But ARSOF has already been thinking about resistance at least since Maj. Gen. William “Wild Bill” Donovan. As this Army doctrine has been designed to support or oppose resistance, and explicitly includes considerations of human dynamics, political intercourse, psychological methods, non-lethal activities, etc., it is absurd to suggest that Army doctrine has not, and does not, treat resistance itself. Furthermore, to suggest Army doctrine for resistance is not an established and important voice on a field of knowledge the Army itself created, is an affront to all of the visionary leaders – and professional doctrine writers — who have developed that field for three quarters of a century.

PARTY LINE

Army doctrine for resistance constitutes a disciplined support of what could be characterized as a doctrine “party line.”

The Army has a purpose [apply land power], a perspective [how to be effective in applying land power] and a charter [train and command forces to effectively wield land power]. All of these must be in accordance with U.S. law, American values and U.S. Government policy. Regardless of the interests of all other entities and actors, Army special operations writes resistance doctrine to support these practical Army requirements and within these legal and moral boundaries. In addition, Army Special Operations is the U.S. Special Operations Command’s lead service component for the resistance-related missions prescribed by Congress. Therefore, Army Special Operations resistance doctrine is responsible to the

Commanding General of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. Furthermore, the Army establishes doctrine on doctrine itself, which all members of the Army are obliged to acknowledge. Finally, somewhat like law, Army doctrine is deliberately conservative and is expected to be faithful to time-honored principles and doctrinal precedent that remains valid. The doctrine process is not “just one man’s opinion” and never has been. It represents an orderly, systematic procedure intended to ensure the organization vets doctrine for appropriateness and quality. Army doctrine is accountable to all of the above authorities.

What master will a “science of resistance” serve? Conceivably several. But no matter where that “science” leads or who it may claim to serve, the Department of Defense (and ARSOF resistance doctrine) is obliged to follow the multi-faceted “party line” described above. The DoD has understandable equities it must and should articulate, forward, and defend against competitors for policy favor, budgets etc. The DoD is answerable to both the President and the Congress in ways that academics are not. “Science” and “scientists” are neither infallible nor omniscient. As is shown by the political rancor over “scientifically-settled” topics such as “global warming /climate change” or the “When does life begin, at conception or birth?” question which has “scientists” in support of opposing views; “science” is not necessarily definitive and unassailably authoritative. Caution is in order so that we encourage “Science” to be a partner, but do not allow ourselves to begin to accept “Science” as a master. The “party line” remains in effect.

BOTTOM LINE

Army doctrine for resistance represents a consciously abridged version of “reality” for Soldiers who require a unifying, professional, team language good enough that they can understand one another; unbounded inquiry however fruitful eventually requires a “bottom line.”

People from all professional walks of life understand the phrase “the bottom line.” Entertaining the “good idea fairy” is often popular because it represents creative thought, in genuinely free circumstances it offers opportunities for participation by many voices, there is something exciting about intellectual discovery, and frankly, it offers a stage for personal opinion and an opportunity for personal acclaim of cleverness. But in counsels great and small or rich and mean, and in fields as diverse as business, defense, management and many others, debate and differing opinions must come to a halt at some point in time for some type of conclusion; a “bot-

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tom line.” In some cases, this is achieved by amalgamating the differing opinions presented into a synthesized summary by a collective body. In other cases, the senior decision-maker present shapes the conclusion after considering and drawing from the diverse discussion.

The purpose of the “bottom line” is to produce a useable result; a practical point of reference from which to proceed. The “bottom line” is a truncated model of reality, an active-voiced discriminatory decision to include some ideas and eschew others, a sober disciplining of endless nuance, a practical set-resolution-standard focus restricting distorting magnification and emasculating reductio ad absurdum, and a rebuke to uncertainty when a practical position must be established.

The “bottom line” means “(for now) the time for discussion is over, this is the answer, the plan. Does everyone understand it? Now let’s get stuff done.”

Opposing “philosophers” both deep and facile will object that the “bottom line” is invalid either because it is an affront to the ethereal nuances of epistemology which can only be appreciated by the elite few, or because they simply don’t like the answer. But the bottom line is not an advocacy for anti-intellectualism, it is an advocacy for practicality. Science is necessary, but so is the game plan.


Select Cautions and Recommendations

1. Better science is worthwhile in any field. Better and more “science” focused on resistance is also worthwhile, and that science which may help inform better resistance doctrine is welcome.

2. However, science is neither a panacea nor an infallible authority; not for “resistance” or anything else. Beware giving “science” authority over the legitimate perspectives, needs and responsibilities of Army Special Operations doctrine (among others).

3. Science may inform the creation of better doctrine, but it does not automatically translate into doctrine. Don’t succumb to the notion that doctrine must be “scientific” — as determined by scientists — as opposed to supporting the Army (and others) — as determined by Army leadership.

4. To what extent is a perceived need for so-called “science” a result of ignorance of 80 years of Army Special Operations resistance doctrine?

5. When was the last time you — the reader — read, discussed, taught, argued, commented on, or contributed to, the improvement of Army resistance doctrine? 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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NOTES 01. Paul Tompkins and Robert R. Leonhard. “The Science of Resistance,” in *Small Wars Journal* 2017, downloaded 30NOV18 from <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-science-of-resistance>.

DEFINITION AND KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF DOCTRINE

“Army doctrine [is] **fundamental principles**, with supporting tactics, techniques, procedures and terms and symbols, used for the conduct of operations and which the operating force, and elements of the institutional Army that directly support operations, guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is **authoritative but requires judgment in application**. Army doctrine is the approved (by the Secretary of the Army through the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army) **body of knowledge that is taught and used for the conduct of operations.**” [para. 1-5]

“**Doctrine is not established arbitrarily, nor is it static. It is based on decades and often centuries of experience** (and incorporates the best of) local procedures, best practices and lessons learned from operations and training.” [para. 1-6]

“Soldiers and leaders should **avoid confusing concepts with doctrine**. Concepts are proposals and the basis for experiments on conducting future operations whereas doctrine addresses how Army forces actually operate today.” [para. 1-7]

“Army professionals use doctrine in two contexts: study and reflection as well as conducting (planning preparing, executing and assessing) operations. Thus, **doctrine is—and must be—both theoretical and practical**. Doctrine is not a catalogue of answers to specific problems. Rather, it is a collection of fundamentals, tactics, techniques and procedures for thinking about military problems, which operations are the most complex, and what actions best solve them. **Doctrine is not what to think or how to solve specific problems.**” [para. 1-8]

Army Doctrine Publication No. 1-01, Doctrine Primer, Headquarters Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 2 September 2014.